

money; not just a little bit of money, but billions upon billions of dollars that we owe foreign countries. Because for this war, we haven't paid for it ourselves. We put it on somebody else's tab, our kids' tab, our grandkids' tab. And for now that money is being held, those promissory notes are being held by foreign governments, further undermining the American economy.

So the chickens are coming home to roost here on energy policy, on health care policy and on the policy of the war that has sucked money out of this country that could have gone to sustain our economy.

Well, we can do things about it. We can do things about it. We can make strides, we can take steps to strengthen our economy, once again.

I want to talk for just a brief moment, Mr. Speaker, about one small bill that we passed today that'll start to get us on the road to fiscal and economic sanity once again.

Regardless of what you think about this war, we have spent wildly and out of control. Now, I'm talking about the \$340 million that we spend every day in Iraq.

Now, I think that had we not gone into Iraq in the first place, had we not stepped foot into this quagmire, we could have spent all of that money here at home to educate our own kids, to build our own schools, to retain our own workers.

But even if we had gone into Iraq, if we had just been paying more attention, as a Congress, as to how money was being spent, we could have had a lot more money to do those things that is now being wasted on the battlefield of Iraq and the battlefield of Afghanistan.

One of the ways in which we are wasting money was that we were making and still are, Mr. Speaker, making people rich off of this war. War profiteering is what it's called, people making their fortunes off of the misery of others. That's happening right here and now in the war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan.

In the Government Oversight Committee that I sit on as a freshman member, we had one of the most egregious examples of this practice, Blackwater Security before us back in the fall. The CEO of Blackwater Security who's got a billion dollar contract to basically do the work that the U.S. military should be doing in Iraq, Blackwater is basically a paramilitary citizen army setting up camp in Iraq.

They got a huge contract with the United States Government. 90 percent of Blackwater's profits, excuse me. 90 percent of Blackwater's revenue comes from U.S. taxpayers. I mean, they are, essentially, a quasi-government agency. 90 percent of their money comes from the U.S. taxpayers.

So I asked what I thought was a commonsense question at this hearing. I asked Eric Prince, the CEO of Blackwater, I said, listen. You know what? I think it'd be useful for us to

know as a Congress, and for the American public to know how much profit you make, how much salary do you take as a quasi-public government employee?

Mr. Prince said to us, very clearly, it's none of your business. I'm a private company. It seemed outrageous to me. It seemed outrageous to many of my colleagues on the committee.

We pay your salary. We pay 90 percent of all the money that your company takes in, and you're not going to tell us whether you make \$1 million?

Well, he did tell us that; he did tell us that he made over \$1 million, but he wouldn't tell us how much more.

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\$2 million? \$3 million? \$10 million? \$20 million?

So I put in a bill, a really simple bill that passed on the floor of the House of Representatives today that said for those private companies that are out there making 80 percent or more of their money from the Federal Government, that have \$25 million or more in contracts, you need to tell the American public how much you are taking out in profit. Tell us how much your most highly compensated officials make. Put some sunlight on how much profit you are making off of this war. Seems like a commonsense measure. In fact, it passed unanimously on the House floor this afternoon.

But it says something about how important the change was that was made in control of this House that it took 5 years of this war for that commonsense, simple bill to make it to the House floor, because when it got here, it resulted in a unanimous vote. But it took Democrats taking control of the House in order for these types of bills, cracking down on war profiteering, to even find the light of day here.

And so, yes, so many of us believe that part of bringing us out of this economic mess, this downturn, this recession, whatever you want to call it, is getting us out of this mess that we have gotten ourselves into in Iraq, turning that money around and spending it right here in the United States of America. But until we do that, one of the most important things we can do for our economy is to make sure that to the extent that we are spending money in Iraq that we're spending it wisely, the right way.

That's part of our responsibility as a Congress. At least when I grew up reading the Constitution, learning about the three branches of government, I was told that the House of Representatives was supposed to be a place that oversaw the executive branch, that made sure that the money of the people that they represented was being spent in the right way. Well, that didn't happen here for a long time.

That oversight role that the Congress was supposed to have on the war, on the policies of the President, kind of vanished for about 7 years. Conveniently, they were there for the years in

which there was a Republican Congress and a Democratic President; a record number of subpoenas were flying out of this place when there was a Democratic President. But when there was a Republican Congress and a Republican President, it wasn't happening so much. I would like to think it was a coincidence, but it probably wasn't.

Now we've got oversight again. And a reasonable amount of oversight. Not overreaching. Not politicizing, not grandstanding. The right amount of oversight. And we passed a bill that was part of that process today.

I couldn't be more pleased, tickled, frankly, to be joined on the House floor by one of the originators of the 30-Something Working Group, Representative MEEK.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Well, I want to thank you so very much. When you say "originators," it makes me feel a little old.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to be joining my great colleague here. He had a wonderful bill on today on the floor. I'm so glad that the Members voted in a unanimous way in making sure we bring about the kind of accountability that the American people have been calling for for a very long time now.

I think Mr. MURPHY has stepped on something, like they say in the country, of being able to bring to light, exactly what are you making? Why are you motivated to be a part of this ongoing war, this kind of the quiet storm that's going on, special interests supporting with commercials and all, the war in Iraq and Afghanistan?

So we do know that the war in Afghanistan is all about 9/11, but the war in Iraq, after 5 years, is about something else.

Former President Bill Clinton puts it this way: If a family next door had a fire, any good neighbor would allow their neighbor to come over and stay at their home and let them sleep on the couch or the extra room for a couple of weeks; and maybe that neighbor may ask, well, can I stay for 2 or 3 months? And nine times out of ten, a good neighbor would allow that person to stay 3 or 4 months. But when it's 5 years later, it's no longer about the fire.

I think that it's important that we look at it from that standpoint, especially as we look at some of these companies that are tenfold going along with, let's keep this war going, let's keep the American people scared about what may happen to them if we were to withdraw the majority of our troops from Iraq.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important, and I want to share this with the Members because there was a great debate on this floor today when we talked about this issue of gas prices.

Now it's very ironic that our Republican colleagues on the other side tried to do what we call here on this floor a procedural maneuver, a motion to recommit saying that what are you doing about gas prices in America. Now, this